



eJGN

John Gower Newsletter

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SOCIETY NEWS



Durham
University



“Gower, His Contemporaries, and Their Legacy in MSS and Early Printed Books, 1350-1550.”

The IV International Congress of the John Gower Society in conjunction with the fifteenth biennial meeting of the Early Book Society took place July 9-14, 2017, on the campus of Durham University, UK. Conference hosts were Elizabeth Archibald and Corinne Saunders. Martha Driver and R.F. Yeager, presidents (respectively) of the Early Book Society and the Gower Society, were co-organizers. In attendance were approximately 150 people, who travelled to Durham from fifteen nations, including Australia, Belgium, Canada, China, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Japan, the Netherlands, Singapore, Spain, Switzerland, the UK and the US. Thirty-seven sessions, including roundtables and paper sessions, were scheduled, along with three plenary lectures, visits to the libraries of Durham University, including Archbishop Cosin's and the Palace Green, the library of the Cathedral, and also of Ushaw College, and an all-day excursion to Alnwick Castle. Presenter name, contact information, affiliation, and presentation titles are available in the Research Report section herein.

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Thanks to special efforts by Archibald and Saunders, the University generously made the Great Hall of Durham Castle available for the (very splendid) closing conference dinner. Neither society had held its meeting conjointly before this, but the confluence—judging from unanimously positive post-Congress comments from both EBS and JGS members—proved exceptionally fruitful. For many in the Gower Society, whose focus has been Gower's verse studied in modern editions, discovering the manuscripts and early printed versions under close scrutiny by EBS members was eye-opening, and vice-versa, for many EBS members who heard about Gower for the first time. Plans for the V International Congress of the John Gower Society in 2020 are currently underway, with a venue to be selected in North America.

Statement of Solidarity

The John Gower Society has joined with Medieval Academy of America and other societies and associations of medieval scholars, including the Gender and Medieval Studies Group, the International Arthurian Society-North American Branch, the New Chaucer Society, the International Piers Plowman Society, the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists, the Society for Medieval Feminist Scholarship, and the International Society for the Study of Medievalism, in solidarity and support of the following declaration:

“In light of the recent events in the United States, most recently the racist violence in Charlottesville, Virginia, the undersigned community of medievalists condemns the appropriation of any item or idea or material in the service of white supremacy. In addition, we condemn the abuse of colleagues, particularly colleagues of color, who have spoken publicly against this misuse of history.

As scholars of the medieval world we are disturbed by the use of a nostalgic but inaccurate myth of the Middle Ages by racist movements in the United States. By using imagined medieval symbols, or names drawn from medieval terminology, they create a fantasy of a pure, white Europe that bears no relationship to reality. This fantasy not only hurts people in the present, it also distorts the past. Medieval Europe was diverse religiously, culturally, and ethnically, and medieval Europe was not the entire medieval world. Scholars disagree about the motivations of the Crusades-or, indeed, whether the idea of "crusade" is a medieval one or came later-but it is clear that racial purity was not primary among them.

Contemporary white nationalists are not the first Americans to have turned nostalgic views of the medieval period to racist purposes. It



is, in fact, deeply ironic that the Klan's ideas of medieval knighthood were used to harass immigrants who practiced the forms of Christianity most directly connected with the medieval church. Institutions of scholarship must acknowledge their own participation in the creation of interpretations of the Middle Ages (and other periods) that served these narratives. Where we do find bigotry, intolerance, hate, and fear of "the other" in the past-and the Middle Ages certainly had their share-we must recognize it for what it is and read it in its context, rather than replicating it.

The medieval Christian culture of Europe is indeed a worthy object of study, in fact a necessary one. Medieval Studies must be broader than just Europe and just Christianity, however, because to limit our object of study in such a way gives an arbitrary and false picture of the past. We see a medieval world that was as varied as the modern one. It included horrific violence, some of it committed in the name of religion; it included feats of bravery, justice, harmony, and love, some of them also in the name of religion. It included movement of people, goods, and ideas over long distances and across geographical, linguistic, and religious boundaries. There is much to be learned from studying the period, whether we choose to focus on one community and text or on wider interactions. What we will not find is the origin of a pure and supreme white race.

Every generation of scholars creates its own interpretations of the past. Such interpretations must be judged by how well they explain the writings, art, and artifacts that have come down to us. As a field we are dedicated to scholarly inquiry. As the new semester approaches at many institutions, we invite those of you who have the opportunity to join us. Take a class or attend a public lecture on medieval history, literature, art, music. Learn about this vibrant and varied world, instead of simply being appalled by some racist caricature of it. See for yourself what lessons it holds for the modern world."



Sad News

It is with deep sadness that we relay the loss of three eminent medieval scholars, and long-time members of the John Gower Society.

KURT O. OLSSON (1941-2017)

Kurt O. Olsson, Professor of English *emeritus* at the University of Idaho, died on 26 February, 2017, in Moscow, Idaho, from complications following a heart attack. A native of Chicago, Olsson attended public schools there, prior to four years distinguished study at North Park College, receiving his bachelor of arts as a double major in English literature and philosophy in 1962. Columbia University awarded him a master's degree in comparative literature with a concentration on the English Renaissance in 1963. Returning to the University of Chicago, Olsson completed his Ph.D. in four years, and took a post as an assistant professor of English at the University of Virginia in 1968. After a sabbatical year in London, he moved to the University of Idaho, where he remained until his retirement in 2009.



In Idaho, Olsson lived the life of the mind, and a life of service, both to the full. At the University he served as director of Undergraduate Studies in English from 1975-79, chair of the English department from 1980-1986, acting dean of the College of Letters and Science in 1989-1990, and permanent dean from 1990-2002. In this latter role, Olsson helped to secure a substantial National Endowment for the Humanities grant to support the enhancement of teaching in the humanities and the Humanities Fellows program. His subsequent efforts to raise additional funds to transform the grant into a permanent endowment yielded nearly \$2 million. Subsequently Olsson served as associate provost during 2002-03, before returning full-time to the English department, to resume his duties as chair from 2005-2009. Among his many other efforts on behalf of the university community, Olsson was chair of both the University Center (Idaho Commons) Planning Task Force (1994-95) and the University Center (Idaho Commons) Implementation Task Force (1995-96). A fully committed scholar in the classroom, he was twice recognized for his dedication to teaching, in 1982 with the Alumni Award for Faculty Excellence, and in 1988 with the Associated Students of the University Outstanding Faculty Award. Beyond the University's boundaries, Olsson chaired the Idaho Humanities Council from 1998-2000, and served as a



senator in national gatherings of the Phi Beta Kappa Society between 2000 and 2009.

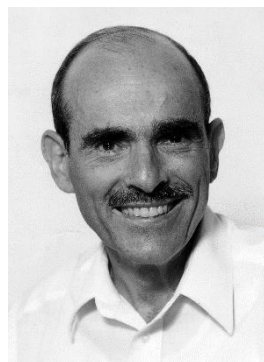
One of the first to join the John Gower Society, Olsson's contributions to its success and to Gower studies generally were extraordinary. He published nine seminal articles on the *Confessio Amantis*, the *Mirour de l'Omme*, and the *Vox Clamantis* ("The Cardinal Virtues and the Structure of John Gower's *Speculum Meditantis*" [1977]; "Rhetoric, John Gower, and the Late Medieval Exemplum" [1977]; "Natural Law and John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*" [1982]; "John Gower's *Vox Clamantis* and the Medieval Idea of Place" [1987]; "Aspects of Gentilesse in John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, Books III-V" [1989]; "Love, Intimacy, and Gower" [1995]; "Reading, Transgression, and Judgment: Gower's Case of Paris and Helen" [1998]; "Composing the King, 1390-1391: Gower's Ricardian Rhetoric" [2009]) as well as his ground-breaking monograph, *John Gower and the Structures of Conversion: A Reading of the Confessio Amantis* (1992), for which he was awarded the John Hurt Fisher Prize for "outstanding contribution to the field of Gower Studies" in 1995. One of the small, select body of double winners of the Gower Society's highest honor, Olsson received the Fisher Prize for the second time in 2010.

In his scholarly and administrative work and in his life, Kurt Olsson combined a thoughtful humanity with rigorous intellectual discipline, the latter masked for many under a genuine humility deeply rooted in his faith and his family. He was a talented trumpet player, having taken up the instrument in his youth, who never (one might say) "blew his own horn." In conversation and by example, he maintained, steadfastly, deliberately, and compellingly, that the core activity of teaching was service to his students and to society; in his published work he strove always (and successfully) by the conclusion of a piece to knot together the meaning of a medieval text with a vision of its aesthetic and moral importance, in its time and for his contemporaries. For all his deep learning, carried so lightly, Kurt knew how to swim a cold lake, note a black-cap in the snow, cook a meal in the woods. He never forgot how to dance.



LAWRENCE L. BESSERMAN (1945-2017)

Lawrence L. Besserman, Professor of English emeritus at Hebrew University died peacefully on 17 July, 2017 in Jerusalem. A summa cum laude graduate of Columbia University and elected to Phi Beta Kappa in his junior year, Besserman received his Ph.D. from Harvard University. His dissertation, "The Story of Job in English Literature," was written under the direction of Morton W. Bloomfield and Larry D. Benson. With that title it became his first book, published in 1979 by Harvard University Press, and defined the area of his life-long work. Other books followed from his hand: *Chaucer and the Bible: A Critical Review of Research, Indexes, and Bibliography* (Garland, 1988); *Chaucer's Biblical Poetics* (University of Oklahoma, 1988); *Biblical Paradigms in Medieval English Literature: From Caedmon to Malory* (Routledge, 2011). In addition to 35 articles and chapters, many reviews and lectures, he edited *The Challenge of Periodization: Old Paradigms and New Perspectives* (Garland, 1996) and *Sacred and Secular in Medieval and Early-Modern Cultures: New Essays* (Palgrave, 2006).



A scholar's scholar, fluently at home in Old and Middle English, Old French, Latin, Hebrew, able to find his way as well through Old Norse prose and Koiné Greek, Larry epitomized the learned life well lived, of a kind and to a degree grown increasingly rare in later times. Always a gentleman, he epitomized that too, in the best sense: ever thoughtful of others' needs, generous with his time and his knowledge, forbearant when forbearance was called for, he would nonetheless rise in a flash to oppose injustice wherever he found it. His students at Hebrew University, where he taught from 1977 until his retirement in 2010, and at Columbia, where he taught in the summers, knew him to set a high bar, but—ever willing to help—he would invariably find ways to see the slow-if-serious scramble over it. If his erudition, lightly borne but ever-present, earned their respect, no less than that of his colleagues, it was yet his kindness that won their hearts.

Or else it was his legendary sense of humor: few have been fonder of a good laugh than Larry Besserman, and even fewer, especially now, when the sideways one-liner seems the hallmark of high humor, could unspool a joke or a shaggy dog tale with his flawless timing and exquisite choice of detail. His stock of funny stories and razor-keen witticisms was vast, seemingly collected over many years and in many places, and carefully collated according to some arcane mental system to facilitate instant recall. When he encountered a

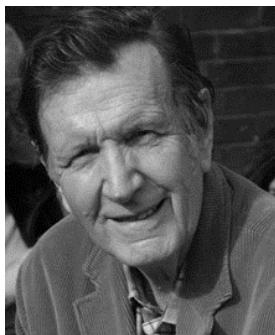


kindred spirit, little delighted him more than to “trade licks,” swapping story-for-story, first in one vein, then in another. If good food and a good bottle were present to share, so much the better.

Above all, Larry was a man who loved deeply. He loved his subject, the multi-lingual literatures of the Middle Ages; his many friends, to whom, once given, his commitment was absolute; his two countries—the United States, the place of his birth, and Israel, in defense whose cause he could be fierce; and Judith foremost, his wife of many years. By all who knew him, learned from him, laughed with him, he will be greatly missed.

JOHN ANTHONY BURROW (1932-2017)

John A. Burrow, Winterstoke Professor of English Literature *emeritus* at the University of Bristol, where he also served as Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Honorary Director of the Early English Text Society, and Fellow of the British Academy, died on 23 October, 2017, in Bristol, UK, of pneumonia. At the forefront of a stellar generation of English medievalists, Burrow published many articles, and seven original monographs, all essential reading, then as now, for students of medieval English literature: *A Reading of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (1965), *Ricardian Poetry* (1971), *Medieval Writers and their Work* (1982), *The Ages of Man* (1986), *Langland's Fictions* (1993), *Gestures and Looks in Medieval Narrative* (2002), and most recently, *The Poetry of Praise* (2008). As well, he edited *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* for Penguin (1982), *Hoccleve's Complaint and Dialogue* for the Early English Text Society (1999), and most recently, with Thorlac Turville-Petre, *Piers Plowman: The B-Version Archetype* (2014).



An early member and staunch supporter of the John Gower Society, Burrow's comparative *Ricardian Poetry: Chaucer, Gower, Langland, and the Gawain Poet*, profoundly affected the new direction taken by Gower studies beginning in the early 1970's. His serious, thoughtful reading of Gower's work, and his convincing assessment of the *Confessio Amantis* as one of the definitive works of a literary age his monograph defined, renewed the positive attitude toward Gower as a poet last seen prior to *Ricardian Poetry* in C.S. Lewis' *Allegory of Love* (1958). Like Lewis (once a tutor of Burrow's at Oxford), Burrow was sensitively alert to Gower's aesthetic achievement, treating the *Confessio* as a work to be valued first for its poetic artistry and only secondarily as an historical record and social artifact, thus putting himself in the vanguard of a



renewing appreciation for Gower as a writer, craftsman, and artist. His influence on subsequent readers of Gower (this editor included, who had the privilege of reading Gower with Burrow at Oxford in 1972) is incalculable, and long-standing: his sensitive approaches to Gower's poetry continue to be essential reading for any serious engagement with Gower's *oeuvre*. At the first International Congress of the Gower Society, held at Queen Mary University of London in 2008, Burrow—although in declining health and hampered by mobility issues moving plenary address, "[Sinning against Love in *Confessio Amantis*](#)" (revised version in *John Gower, Trilingual Poet: Language, Translation, and Tradition*. ed. Dutton, Hines, and Yeager, Cambridge: Brewer, 2010). His learning, his clarity, his gentility of spirit, his courage—all leave gaps we shall be hard put to fill.

Business Meeting at ICMS 2017

As has been customary, the John Gower Society will sponsor two sessions at the 53rd International Congress on Medieval Studies, 10-13 May, 2018, on the campus of Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo. The sessions sponsored by the Gower Society will be:

1. "Gower's Dark Materials," a broad interrogation of variously defined aspects of "darkness" in "moral" Gower's works.
2. "Reading through Form: A Special Session in Memory of Kurt Olsson," an engagement with Olsson's seminal work on Gower, with particular attention to close reading and interpretive practices as they relate to devotion, history, and/or the law.

Gower Society Working Group

At the business meeting of the Society held at the International Congress on Medieval Studies, May 11, 2017, several members formed "working group" to pursue projects as directed by the membership at the meeting. The JGS Working Group consists of Stephanie Batkie, Paulo Castilho, Brian Gastle, Roger Ladd, Matthew Irvin, Kara McShane, Steele Nowlin, and Jeffrey Stoyanoff. Adopted as a current task was strengthening the teaching of Gower via publication and improved pedagogy. To this end, the JGS Working Group is pursuing the following initiatives:

- Contacting and working with publishers encourage a greater amount and variety of Gower's works in anthologies often used in the classroom (such as the Broadview and Norton anthologies).
- Increase the availability of pedagogical resources available for the teaching of Gower's works, including making more teaching



resources available on the John Gower Society web site (www.JohnGower.org).

As part of this initiative, Kara McShane sends the following call for purposive contributions to a collection:

“*Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Teaching (SMART): Special Issue*

The MLA published its *Approaches to Teaching the Poetry of John Gower* in 2011, starting a crucial conversation about teaching Gower’s works across a range of contexts. This cluster of essays intended for *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Teaching* will expand on the work of the 2011 MLA volume. Though considerable progress has been made in bringing Gower’s works into the classroom, Gower is nonetheless underrepresented in anthologies and thus on syllabi, and much less attention has been given to approaches to teaching his works. *SMART* has expressed initial interest in a cluster of essays, somewhere between three and eight pieces. At present, the cluster contains a planned four pieces: we would welcome several more.

We invite contributors to take a range of approaches. Some potential approaches may include teaching Gower’s multilingual and/or multicultural contexts; Gower and the digital humanities; Gower’s work in the context of survey courses; and performative approaches to teaching Gower. We are particularly interested in pieces addressing teaching Gower in the context of the undergraduate classroom, and we invite authors to include practical approaches for doing so. Final pieces should be approximately 2500 words, not including notes.

If interested in contributing, please contact kmcshane@ursinus.edu. Full-length drafts will be due no later than 30 December 2017.”

The Gower Project Update

Georgiana Donavin sends the following update:

“Eve Salisbury and Georgiana Donavin—co-directors of The Gower Project—held a planning retreat in Durham after the JGS / EBS Congress. One outcome of that retreat is a newly constituted Advisory Board. As a result of good advice from both new and longstanding members, we are making changes to our home page (www.gowerproject.org), online texts pages (www.gowerproject.com), Mission Statement, and the core documents connected to our online publication: *Accessus: A Journal of Premodern Literature and New Media*. Have a look and let us know what you think.



In this report, we would like to remind you of the opportunities afforded by [The Gower Project Translation Wiki](#). Encouraging an undergraduate class in medieval literature to perform close readings of Gower's Middle English and to post Modern English renditions on the Wiki is a wonderful classroom exercise for both group and individual work. Some of the better translations are still posted and will help next year's students comprehend Middle English poetry. The Gower Project Translation Wiki also offers a professional translation: Robert J. Meindl's translation of the *Vox Clamantis*, Book 6. If your students could benefit from the Wiki or you have a translation of the *Mirour*, *Vox*, or *Confessio* that you would like to make available online, please contact Donavin at gdonavin@westminstercollege.edu to establish contributing memberships for you and your students and to provide a short tutorial."

On-line Gower Bibliography

Members are reminded that the Gower Society's On-line Gower Bibliography is available for use, thanks to the diligent efforts of Mark Allen of the University of Texas at San Antonio (now emeritus) who—although now retired from his Chaucer bibliographical duties—very kindly has agreed to remain in his former capacity for the Gower Society. (All Gowerians owe Professor Allen a grateful dram or two at a future Society gathering.) Professor Allen sends the following update regarding the bibliography:

Gower Bibliography Update

The Gower Online Bibliography had been updated. Its data and basic utilities are essentially the same, but due to changes in the catalog of the Libraries of the University of Texas at San Antonio, the bibliography has a new public interface. The new version is available at the link below and will run concurrently with the original version for the next month. During this period, please investigate the new version and offer suggestions for refinement or improvement of the database. If you have questions, please explore the Help page or contact me directly. The new version will permanently replace the original on or about December 1, 2017.

New version: <http://gower.lib.utsa.edu/>
Original: <http://gowerbib.lib.utsa.edu/>

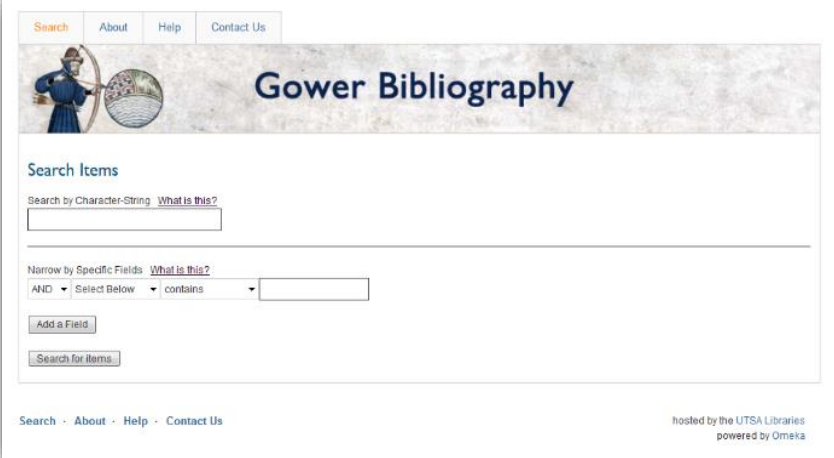
The Gower Bibliography is sponsored by the John Gower Society and supported by the UTSA Libraries. Its goal is to provide a comprehensive, annotated bibliography of publications that pertain to John Gower, derived the bibliographies published biannually in the John Gower



Newsletter and in R. F. Yeager's *John Gower Materials: A Bibliography Through 1979* (New York and London: Garland, 1981). Please help me in thanking those most directly responsible for the upgrade of the online version of the bibliography: Hejin Shin, Head of Library Services at the UTSA Libraries, and Bruce Orcutt, Senior Systems Analyst.

Many thanks,
Mark Allen (mark.allen@utsa.edu)

Suggestions to improve the format and use should be sent to Professor Allen. There is also a link from the Society website (<https://www.JohnGower.org>) to the bibliography. Members are urged to make use of this very helpful tool—and to assist keeping it current by communicating about new publications of interest to Society members.



The screenshot shows the Gower Bibliography website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links: Search, About, Help, and Contact Us. Below this is a header image featuring a medieval manuscript illustration of a scholar and a globe, with the title "Gower Bibliography" in a large, blue, serif font. The main content area is titled "Search Items" and includes a search box with the placeholder text "Search by Character-String What is this?". Below the search box is a section for narrowing results, titled "Narrow by Specific Fields What is this?". This section includes a dropdown menu for "AND", a dropdown for "Select Below", and a dropdown for "contains". There are also buttons for "Add a Field" and "Search for items". At the bottom of the page, there is a footer with the same navigation links as the top bar, and a note that the site is "hosted by the UTSA Libraries" and "powered by Omeka".

<http://gower.lib.utsa.edu/>



Nominations for the John Hurt Fisher Prize

The Society's highest honor, the Fisher Prize "for significant contribution to the field of John Gower Studies" is awarded annually at the International Congress on Medieval Studies in Kalamazoo, Michigan. The selection committee, consisting each year of the Society President, the prizewinner of the previous year, and a graduate student, requests nominations for the 2018 award. Members of the 2018 award committee will be the 2017 winner Matthew W. Irvin, University of the South/Sewanee (mwirvin@sewanee.edu), graduate student member Zachary Stone (zes9bx@virginia.edu) and R.F. Yeager (rfyeager@hotmail.com). Nominations (names and a brief rationale) for the Fisher Prize may be sent by email to any and all committee members at the addresses above, or by post to R.F. Yeager, Department of English, University of West Florida, Pensacola, Florida 32514. **The deadline for nominations is 15 December 2017.**

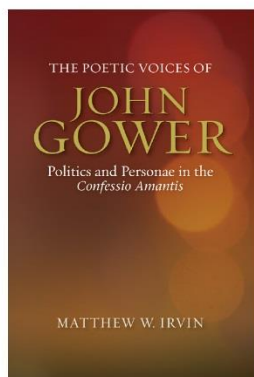


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WINNER OF THE GOWER SOCIETY'S 2017 FISHER PRIZE
for making a "significant contribution to Gower Studies"

The Poetic Voices of John Gower Politics and Personae in the *Confessio Amantis*

MATTHEW W. IRVIN



An examination of Gower's skilful deployment of personae in his works, showing the parallels between the way he treats love, and the way he treats politics.

"Irvin's study is wide-ranging, learned, and productive. By encompassing Gower's major works while attending to many divergent aspects of the *Confessio*, this book has much to offer future readers and scholars of Gowerian poetics." JOURNAL OF ENGLISH AND GERMANIC PHILOLOGY

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Volumes in the Series are as follows:

- Vol. I: *A Concordance to John Gower's Confessio Amantis*, ed. J.D. Pickles and J.L. Dawson (1987)
- Vol. II: R.F. Yeager, *John Gower's Poetic: The Search for New Arion* (1990)
- Vol. III: *Gower's Confessio Amantis: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Peter Nicholson (1991)
- Vol. IV: Kurt Olsson, *John Gower and the Structures of Conversion: A Reading of the Confessio Amantis* (1992)
- Vol. V: María Bullón-Fernández, *Fathers and Daughters in Gower's Confessio Amantis: Authority, Family, State and Writing* (2000)
- Vol. VI: T. Matthew N. McCabe, *Gower's Vulgar Tongue: Ovid, Lay Religion, and English Poetry in the Confessio Amantis* (2011)
- Vol. VII: David R. Carlson, *John Gower, Poetry and Propaganda in Fourteenth-Century England* (2012)
- Vol. VIII: Conrad Van Dijk *John Gower and the Limits of the Law* (2013)
- Vol. IX: Matthew W. Irvin, *The Poetic Voices of John Gower: Politics and Personae in the Confessio Amantis* (2014)
- Vol. X: Ana Sáez-Hidalgo and R.F. Yeager, eds., *John Gower in England and Iberia: Manuscripts, Influences, Reception* (2014)
- Vol. XI: Russell A. Peck and R.F. Yeager, eds., *John Gower: Others and the Self* (2017)

The editors are continually seeking new, book-length studies of Gower's poetry. Society members with book-length projects are urged to be in touch with the General Editors, R.F. Yeager, rfeager@hotmail.com or at the postal address, above; and/or A.J. Minnis, alastair.minnis@yale.edu or Department of English, Yale University, New Haven, CT 06520. New proposals and/or manuscripts are welcome.



Library Subscriptions

Does your library subscribe to *JGN*? About a dozen institutions are regular subscribers, and from time to time members have wondered whether this is done. In fact, *JGN* is a publication complete with ISSN (1051-3493), registered with the Library of Congress, and is readily available to libraries. The annual subscription fee to institutions is \$25.00. Inquiries and orders should be addressed to the Society, c/o Department of English and Foreign Languages, University of West Florida, 11000 University Parkway, Pensacola FL 32514.

Notes and Queries

Society members are reminded that, precisely as did *JGN*, *eJGN* will provide space for readers' notes and queries. Announcements of upcoming events of interest to Society members, discoveries, briefly noted, and requests for research assistance have all in the past appeared in the "Notes and Queries" column in these pages. Such items should be sent to the Society at the mailing address above. The deadline for publication in the fall issue is 15 September, 2017.

A Query still unanswered...

Society members David Ransom and Joyce Coleman have asked: "Is there any evidence that Gower knew Boccaccio's *Genealogie deorum gentilium*?" Gowerians?

Call for News

The purpose of any newsletter being to disseminate news, readers are reminded to keep *eJGN* informed of current projects, recent articles and books either seen or published, theses and dissertations advised or written. Bibliographic information should be sent to the Society's Bibliographical Editor, Peter Nicholson, at the address below. Copies of books, off-prints and photo-reproduced items are encouraged. Members are especially urged to notify their publishers to send the Bibliographical Editor, or the General Editor (R.F. Yeager), review copies of books and monographs. This will ensure the timely appearance of new, important studies and keep members current.



Report on Gower Research

eJGN will provide as complete as possible a listing of current work on Gower based on an active search of recent publications, but we also solicit the contributions of our readers. Notices of work in progress or completed, offprints, and references to items that have been missed by eJGN or by the available bibliographies will be gratefully received by the Bibliographical Editor: Peter Nicholson, Department of English, University of Hawai'i at Manoa, 1733 Donaghho Road, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96822 (nicholso@hawaii.edu). This issue's report is a collaborative production of Linda Barney Burke, Roger A. Ladd, Jean-Pascal Pouzet, and R.F. Yeager. Each has placed his or her initials at the end of the report(s) for which he or she is responsible.

N.B.: With this issue, eJGN will continue to fill gaps in the Online Gower Bibliography by reporting on items previously published, but heretofore overlooked. Members who are aware of such overlooked items are entreated to alert R.F. Yeager, and/or Peter Nicholson.

Books and Articles

1. Biggs, Frederick M. *Chaucer's Decameron and the Origin of the Canterbury Tales*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2017.

[Biggs seeks to establish Chaucer's direct reliance on Boccaccio's *Decameron* for inspiration and for narratives in the *Canterbury Tales*. Gower figures prominently, especially in chapter 1, in a section sub-titled "The Canon's Yeoman's Prologue and Tale and Gower's *Confessio Amantis*" (32-42), and chapter 5, entitled "The Wife of Bath's Tale and the Tale of Florent" (178-227). Much of Biggs' rangy argument about Chaucer's use of the *Decameron* relies on establishing composition dates for various tales. It is important for his case to show that Gower's discussion of alchemy in Book IV was revised—and criticized—by Chaucer into the *CYT*. In Biggs' view Gower considered alchemy a true science (because Genius says so), and in mocking that notion Chaucer continued a "Quarrel" between the two (much debated of yore) that had begun with Chaucer's satirical portrait of Gower as the Man of Law, and a "sharp criticism" of Gower in the *WBT*—which, Biggs claims (relying in part on Tyrwhitt), Chaucer crafted out of the "Tale of Florent" to condemn "Gower's moral blindness to rape" and his failure "to treat the stories of others and women honestly," albeit that—in Biggs' view—Chaucer thought Gower had the capability to do so (214-15)." [RFY]



2. Edwards, Robert R. *Invention and Authorship in Medieval England*. Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 2017.

[Edwards sets out the terms of his inquiry early in his introduction: “The central argument I want to advance is that literary authorship develops in medieval England from discrete acts of invention—that is, from the discovery of expressive possibilities within and against established conventions of reading and writing. As this description implies, authorship is at once rhetorical and literary, historical and poetic” (xi). He amplifies this a bit later, noting that “we must look...to moments when writers claim authorship and locate themselves in relation to literary culture....These moments are not simply exemplary but constitutive; they are the primary record of writers acting within historical contexts to inaugurate themselves as authors” (xxviii). Clearly, Gower figures large in Edwards’ subsequent analysis of writers and their works that carry his points. For Edwards, Gower is “the poet who most overtly seeks to become an author in trilingual medieval England. Throughout his career, Gower employs the textual apparatus of biblical and classical commentary to frame his poems. He sees his major works—the *Mirour de l’Omme*, *Vox Clamantis*, and *Confessio Amantis*—as comprising a literary canon, and he generates paratexts to sustain the structure of his canon, even as the works themselves undergo development, revision, and contextualization. Authorship figures internally in the *Mirour* and the *Vox* through the voice of an exemplary self, preacher, and prophet. It is marked externally in Gower’s glosses in the *Confessio* and his creation of the persona of a lover whose final dismissal from erotic service coincides with Gower’s return to his earlier body of didactic writing. Gower is also the custodian of his reputation as an author. Here he has his precedents in [Walter] Map obliquely and Marie [de France] explicitly, while his contemporaries embed their authorship with their fictions. Moreover, after completing the *Confessio*, Gower creates a secondary and parallel canon of shorter poems, in three languages, that stands as a commentary and extension of his major poem” (xxix-xxx).

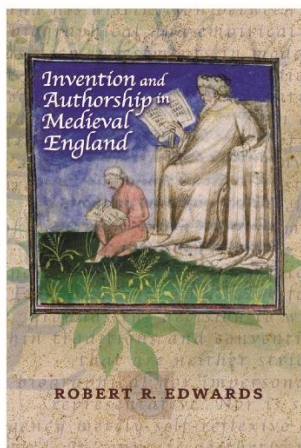
He devotes chapter 3 (“John Gower: Scriptor, Compositor, Auctor,” 63-104) of the monograph to a work-by-work commentary on Gower’s poems, major and minor, in all three languages. Again, Edwards sets out the terms of his larger argument very clearly: “In most reckonings, Gower figures as a poet who writes as a moralist” (65). However, as Edwards establishes in subsequent pages, for Gower the role of moralist was inseparable from—even dependent upon—his self-establishment as *auctor*: “Gower functions as a moralist precisely by being an author....Gower’s poetic career reflects a sustained and continually renewed performance of authorship in the service of ethical and political reflection. Authorship is the necessary condition of ‘moral Gower’” (66).] [RFY]





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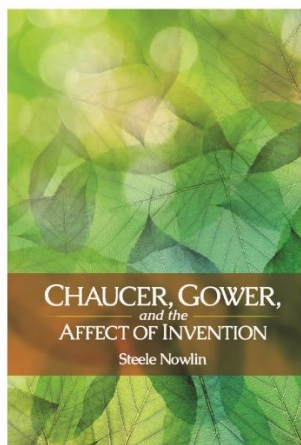


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3. Nowlin, Steele. *Chaucer, Gower, and the Affect of Invention*. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2016.

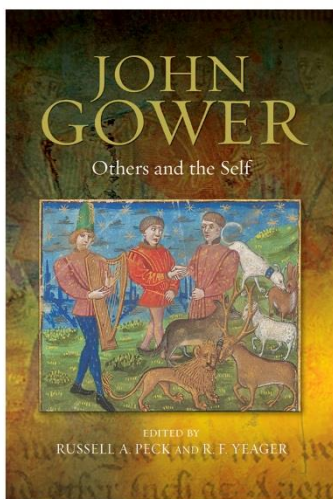
[“This book studies,” Nowlin writes in his Introduction, (entitled “The Emergence of Invention”) “the ‘affect of invention,’ a self-reflexive process that conceptualizes affect and invention in terms of each other and that understands invention as a process concurrent with the movements of affective emergence” (1). Clearly, the book doesn’t lack for ambition. Two chapters on Gower (“‘A Thing So Strange’: Macrocosmic Emergence in the *Confessio Amantis*” [93-121] and “‘The Chronique of the Fable’: Transformative Poetry and the Chronicle Form in the *Confessio Amantis*” [122-50]) follow two on Chaucer, one considering the *Hous of Fame*, the other the *Legend of Good Women*. Nowlin sees Gower and Chaucer sharing basic poetic tenets: “The projects of both writers...actively work to understand the relationship between affective occurrence and inventional activity in a similar way, appealing not simply to scholastic rhetorical traditions or neoplatonic notions of poetic creation. The intersection of internal and external worlds, of cosmological concerns with the particular social, cultural, and political realities of lived experience that make both Chaucer’s and Gower’s writings so appealing to us today, constitutes the same conceptual realms in which they explore the relationship of affect and invention” (31). Nevertheless, for Nowlin there are differences between what the two poets considered the purpose of poetry, the most significant being the focus of each: Chaucer’s gaze turned inward (“Chaucer’s poems continually work to ‘get behind’ the discourses and emotions that structure experience” [32] , while Gower looked outward, attempting to write verse that would transform society (“Gower’s poem works to move the potentially productive emergent qualities that characterize the affect of invention into the world outside of poetic fiction” [33]). By way of developing his argument, and in order to “show how this Gowerian formulation of invention as movement—as *weie*—operates thematically and metatextual in three significant and representative tales” (99): the “Tale of the Three Questions,” “Constantine and Sylvester,” and “Medea and Jason.” Nowlin further provides a close reading of the *Confessio* Prologue and bits of the Book I, which in his view evince “how...emergent potential can be registered and generated through poetic invention” (98). In a final chapter (“From Ashes Ancient Come: Affective Intertextuality in Chaucer, Gower, and Shakespeare”) Nowlin analyses Shakespeare’s “Phoenix and the Turtle” with *The Parlement of Foules*, and *Pericles* with Book VIII of the *Confessio Amantis*. He concludes that “‘Phoenix’ and *Pericles*...define their self-conscious interactions with Chaucer and Gower not only in terms of source material, medieval alterity, and authorial politics but also in ways that recognize and build on Chaucer’s and Gower’s self-conscious representations of inventional emergence” (210).] [RFY]



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John Gower: Others and the Self

EDITED BY RUSSELL A. PECK AND R.F. YEAGER



The topics of “selfhood” and “otherness” lie at the heart of these compelling new assessments of John Gower’s poetry. Divided into three main areas—knowing the self and others; the essence of strangers; and social ethics and ethical poets—through this lens they examine the wide range of Gower’s interests: the political, socio-economic, legal, medical, and

theological issues that aroused the conscience and stirred the aesthetic of this trilingual Middle English poet.

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4. Peck, Russell A. and R.F. Yeager, eds. *John Gower: Others and the Self. Publications of the John Gower Society XI. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2017.*

[This collection of sixteen essays “originated as part of the Third International Congress of the John Gower Society, held at the University of Rochester, June 29-July 3, 2014. . . . All the essays here have been included because in one manner or another they comment on facets of selfhood: views of the inside, the personal, and of the exterior, the outside in its interaction with the ‘other,’ defined several ways” (Introduction 1). The collection is divided into three sections.

Part 1, “**Knowing the Self and Others**,” consists of five essays “that, taken together, reflect on multiple aspects of self-encounter” (Introduction 1).

Peck, Russell. “The Materiality of Cognition in Reading, Staging, and Regulation of Brain and Heart Activities in Gower’s *Confessio Amantis*.” 7-31.

The essay begins by reconstructing the medieval view of neuroanatomy and cognition as inherited from Galen and illustrated in medieval and early modern diagrams, four of which are reproduced in the text. In medieval cognitive theory, the brain has three ventricles: first, the *imaginatio* (or *fantasia*) forms an image based on input from the eye. Second, the *imaginativa* uses images from the first cell to create a “performative materialization,” that is, a “staging” of multiple mental scenarios along with a sense of their meaning—this lively process is called “multiplication of species.” The third is the storehouse of memory which also contains the *membrorum motiva*, a link to intention and bodily motion (8-12). Other diagrams connect the brain to the heart (with music having the ability to bypass the brain) and provide for a *custos* (force of habit) that regulates cognition (13-17). All of these concepts are key to understanding the *Confessio Amantis*, where the sense of sight—both for good and ill—is the chief route of access to heart and mind and the entryway for love (17-18). While Amans obsessively stokes his *imaginativa* with remembered images of the lady (19-20), Nectanabus generates visual stimuli to manipulate the performative faculties of Olympias, his target for seduction (21). Acting directly on the heart, music promotes peace and awakens Apollonius from despair (24-25), while a darkly parallel progress—from eye to *fantasia* to heart to members—brings on a disastrous coupling and death for Canace at the hands of her heartless father (25-29). In the “Tale of Three Questions,” however, “all three ventricles are at peace with each other and their



audience, through Peronelle's careful staging and balanced regulation" (31).

Batkie, Stephanie. "The Sound of My Voice: Aurality and Credible Faith in the *Vox Clamantis*." 32-49.

Drawing on the theory of Jean-Luc Nancy, Batkie argues that "Gower's persistent use of audio-centric language and wordplay argues for a poetics of attention and openness . . . the openness and uncertainty of the ear" (37). While *hearing* is involuntary, *listening* is active, "temporal," and "open to the other" (32), as the listener must attend in expectation as a vocal utterance unfurls over time. Aurality calls into question the credibility of the speaker as well as the credulity of the listener; Gower values credulity as necessary to learning, even though it may lead to error (36). The *Vox* reechoes with aural approaches, especially the homonymic punning uniquely suited to connect related concepts and allow, where appropriate, for multiple interpretations. Having recently co-translated the *Vox*, Batkie explicates a series of sample passages: by playing on "sensus" (understanding) and "census" (accounting [of money]), Gower underscores how greedy prelates equate wealth with wisdom, while slighting the poor. The poet's riddle on his name has several meaningful solutions. The goddess Fortune—object of misplaced popular credulity—is described in grammatically ambiguous language well suited to convey her deceptive quality (37-44). For Gower, the attentive credulity of the listener is a necessary step to faith, to apprehending "the polysemy of the divine" (45). In new translation, the dual nature of the baby Jesus is harmonized in homonymic wordplay: "That he **presses** Mary's breast **expresses** true man;/A new star **exposed expresses** that he is God" (46-47, *Vox* II.413-14). Although Gower's prophetic voice may sometimes sound in weeping, his vocal appeal to active faith is nonetheless resistant to despair (34, 48-49).

Irvin, Matthew. "'Noght withoute Peine': Chastity, Complaint, and Lucrece's *Vox Clamantis*." 50-72.

How to explain the peculiar juxtaposition of pity and chastity among the virtues enjoined upon the king in Book VII of the *Confessio Amantis*? As Irvin argues, citing the political theory of Foucault and Agamben, ". . . pity is a form of 'power over life' that sovereignty claims . . ." (51). It descends from the classical virtue of "clemency" defined by Seneca as a function of superior power, be it of emperor or *paterfamilias* (53-56), combined with the Christian virtue of affective pity modeled after God's salvific love (56-58). In classical and Christian theory, failure of



clemency (or pity) leads to lechery, as witnessed by the sexual sadism and uncontrolled womanizing of Nero (59-60). True power over life requires chastity, “a power available *only* to men” (63, discussing CA VII.4255-56). Like pity, chastity serves the agenda of biopower as monopolized by the male; the man who gives in to desire, as did the rapist Arruns, becomes a mere feminized “caitif” in the service of Venus (66). The suffering of Mary at her son’s passion was expressed in the *planctus*, a “script” for the feeling of pity, but in Gower’s response to the *planctus*, he always speaks in his own masculine voice (68-69, discussing MO 28909-220). Although he tells the story of Lucrece in his section on chastity, Gower’s Lucrece is scarcely granted a voice, only a wordless, almost subhuman outpouring of tears. Even her last words are barely uttered, “noght withoute peine,” and recorded only in paraphrase (71-72). “Her chastity is not a virtue, but a spontaneous natural event subject to the male gaze, compassion, and power over life: she is an object of male power over the household” (71).

Taylor, Karla. “Reading Faces in Gower and Chaucer.” 73-90.

At CA VII.3545-47, “Genius voices the astonishing advice that the king should shape his face so as to control what it expresses to others. ‘A king schal make good visage/That no man knowe of his corage/Bot al honour and worthinesse” (73), thus seeming to condone a form of deception as a strategy for rule. However, this counsel is not unexpected, as the medieval “science” of physiognomy was a staple of advice to princes and is ubiquitous to a major source for CA Book VII, the *Secreta* [sic] *Secretorum* (74-76). In a world much declined from the Golden Age, a king must control his own “visage” and also read faces if he seeks to preserve his rule. Both Chaucer and Gower offer numerous examples of the “good visage”—in all its moral ambiguity—as a strategy for survival in royalty and other walks of life (78-82). As a poet who writes for kings, Gower resolves the tension by trusting the king to keep his face a plain reflection of his “corage” (82). In Taylor’s argument, Gower deleted the tribute to Chaucer from the Henrician version of the *Confessio* as a rebuke to his friend for failure to comment on the political crises of 1386 and 1388 (83). Chaucer responded by injecting the Gowerian theme of “corage” versus “visage” into his Clerk’s reworking of Petrarch’s translation of the “Tale of Griselda,” with Walter the archetypal tyrant who conceals his uncontrolled desires behind a “good visage” (88). For Chaucer, “The result of Genius’ Machiavellian advice . . . is not a disciplined, ethical ruler, but a Walter,” and Gower is following the example of Petrarch by trimming his ethical standards to write for tyrants (90).



Cooper, Helen. “Gower and Mortality: The Ends of Storytelling.” 91-107.

Cooper’s analysis begins with the famous surprise ending to the *Confessio Amantis*, where Amans is curtly informed that he is old and unfit for love: “in ending his story collection like this, Gower is being true to the deep roots of the form in ways we do not normally think about. Ideas of mortality, the end of life, and the ends of storytelling are closely linked. Ends can be spatial or temporal,” or synonymous with the “final cause,” the aim or purpose of an action (92). In the latter sense, the end or purpose of a story may be found in its ending, for example: “The Apocalypse is the necessary conclusion to the volume that opened with Creation” (94). Although this “end” may include a moral, Cooper’s discussion—ranging expertly from Gilgamesh to Gower—explains how the universal “end” of storytelling is to hold our common mortality at bay, at least in fantasy, yet somehow accommodate the reality that even the longest of story collections—like every human life—must end, must die. The final story of the *Confessio Amantis*—while ending happily—in that same happy ending artfully affirms mortality as the end of storytelling: “The echo of St. Paul’s mystical experience [at *Apollonius of Tyre*, CA VIII.1898-99] suggests that the story is moving even beyond the world of time . . . the audience . . . mortal like Gower . . . when his tales come to their end, can share in his hope of joy on the other side of apocalypse, the end of the world, the end of the story” (106-07).

Part II, “**The Essence of Strangers**,” includes five essays united by “the expanding awareness by the singular self of an encompassing ‘otherness’” (Introduction 2).

Nolan, Maura. “Sensation and the Plain Style in Gower’s *Confessio Amantis*.” 111-40.

Nolan’s analysis opens with a classic example of biblical *sermo humilis*, a simple teaching brought to life with a single sensory detail: “whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones . . . shall not lose his reward” (Mat. 10.42, discussed at 111). Nolan proceeds to analyze the same kind of “plain style” in Gower’s *Confessio Amantis*, arguing that this style “is uniquely suited to represent and indeed to recreate sensory experience,” together with the aesthetic and instructive values such experience is especially equipped to provide (113, 140). The medium of Gower’s English plain style is a smooth and regular verse that never strives for effect or diverts attention from the story (114-19). The poet explains his moral purpose at CA 1.8 ff.: to engage with “the everyday . .



. world governed by love” (121), in the plain and literal style required of priest and penitent in the sacrament of confession (121-25). The “Tale of Acteon and Diana” illustrates the riches of the plain style in action. Told by Genius as a warning against misusing the sense of sight, the exemplum places the reader within the consciousness of Acteon as he emerges from a flowery forest into an aptly titled “litel plein,” where suddenly—but willfully—he views the naked goddess standing in a well (125-29). A different, morally ambiguous effect is accomplished by a single sensory detail in the passage where Amans describes an imaginary visit to his lady’s bed at night: his disembodied “herte” finds her body “warm” (135). As Amans describes his painful return to reason, the imagery of a cold shower evokes the reader’s empathy along with moral instruction (139-40).

Zarins, Kim. “Violence without Warning: Sympathetic Villains and Gower’s Crafting of Ovidian Narrative.” 141-55.

Zarins focuses her analysis on how Gower retells the stories of “two Ovidian villains who are known for their depravity” (141), Polyphemus in “The Tale of Acis and Galatea,” and Tereus the rapist who mutilates his victim. “Gower writes sympathetically about them (141), treating their stories “without irony,” that is, devoid of the heavy foreshadowing that in Ovid’s telling, makes them evil from the start: “. . . throughout Gower’s *Confessio*, monsters are not born, but made” (143). The lonely Polyphemus is assailed by envy of the happy lovers Acis and Galatea, but only when he surrenders to his sinful urge—by burying the lovers in a landslide—is he named as a “giant,” a monster (144). Tereus is declared an evil freak of nature both in Ovid and Chaucer’s *Legend of Good Women*, while Gower goes out of his way to portray the future rapist as a loving husband until the moment of his choosing to act on a criminal desire (152). In many other tales, Genius illustrates how “conversion” to evil is possible for anyone, thus providing a cautionary example for Amans in his spiritual struggle—and of course for the reader as well. The reader’s sympathy with Gower’s villains is based not on guilty identification, as is sometimes alleged, but on a sense of our common humanity and free will. Zarins notes: “Gower’s greatest villains are unsettling because they started out happy, hopeful, and ordinary, and in Gower’s sympathetic retelling, one can imagine an alternate ending in which they remain so” (155).



Scanlon, Larry. "Gower, Lydgate, and Incest." 156-82.

For Chaucer (or at least, his fictional Man of Law), the sin of incest is unspeakable because "unkynde," that is, unnatural, an "abhomination" (158). Eschewing such repression, Gower presents a detailed accounting of incest as wholly natural and yet not natural: sibling marriages were necessary for the children of Adam and Eve; natural law does not forbid it, only positive law; siblings Canace and Machaire were drawn to their fatal union by a natural desire—yet the poet proceeds to contradict his own dispassionate analysis, as he excoriates Amon's rape of his sister Tamar as "ayein kinde," thus an object of horror (164, referring to *CA* VIII.215). Both Chaucer and Gower express an anxiety over incest consistent with the late medieval "tectonic shift" to the ideal of "companionate marriage" as natural and proper (166), but "it is Gower whose poetic is the fuller and more searching" (168). Scanlon discusses "three moments in particular in Lydgate's poetry where he confronts the legacy of Gower in the form of the problem of incest" (172). In the story of Oedipus, Lydgate dwells on the grisly unnatural union of mother and son as it gave rise to the unnatural crime of fratricide, but paradoxically notes the free choice of the brothers to sin (174). Departing from Gower, he darkens the union of Canace and Machaire as "unnatural," even as he appears to celebrate the "meek[ness]" of Canace as she obeys her father's murderous command (177). In the unfinished allegory *Reason and Sensuality*, the goddess Diana (as moral instructress) advises the protagonist to reject illicit unions, including the unnatural sin of incest (178); his reward will be marriage, uneasily "naturalize[d]" . . . as the true consummation of erotic desire" (180). Lydgate has not resolved the contradictions in Gower's conflicted treatment of incest, but the tension may be strategic on his part as it is inherent in the topic.

Yeager, R.F. "Gower's Jews." 185-203.

Gower was not preoccupied with the Jews. In all his vast trilingual corpus, fewer than 300 lines refer to Jewish people *per se*, "of which 122 make up the 'Tale of the Jew and the Pagan'," the primary focus of Yeager's analysis (184, referring to *CA* VII.3207*-3329*). The tale is anti-Semitic by any standard. Although unschooled by true religion, the pagan follows the law of nature by helping his fellow human, while the Jew observes Jewish law by helping only himself and his fellow Jew. The story presents an analogue to the parable of the Good Samaritan, where the Samaritan (a religious outcast, a sort of pagan) shows himself superior in compassion to the (obviously Jewish) priest and Levite (188-90). In both stories, however, it is only the wrongful exercise of free will "[that] makes



a Jew, not ethnicity or genealogy" (190). Gower's work is notably devoid of the usual medieval tropes on Jewish people as condemned by mere fact of birth to "societal detrimentality, physical deformity, monstrosity or bodily filth" (191). Intriguingly, the story appears only in a group of manuscripts evidently designed for Henry IV (193-94). According to St. Augustine, the Jewish people were kept alive for a reason, and a few would be converted, so all must be treated fairly (195-96). The "Jew and the Pagan" appears in a discussion of "pity," a virtue the poet was especially concerned to promote in Henry (199). Also, Gower may have wished to encourage the new king in supporting London's *domus conversorum*, a refuge for converted Jews that must have been familiar to Gower (197, 202).

Kobayashi, Yoshiko. "Letters of Old Age: The Advocacy of Peace in the Works of John Gower and Philippe de Mézières." 204-22.

This essay focuses on Gower's *In Praise of Peace*, which Kobayashi seeks "to situate in a cross-channel movement committed to the promotion of peace in Europe" (204-05). As her frame for comparison, she uses Philippe de Mézières' *Epistre au roi Richart* (1395) and *Songe du vieil pelerin* (1385), both of which offer advice to kings through the author-persona of "an old sage" (205) much like the self-construction of John Gower. After tipping his hat to just war theory in defense of Henry's usurpation, the English poet proceeds to his major preoccupations: the Christian-versus-Christian bloodshed between England and France, and the conflict of pope versus pope, the true source of disharmony between Christian nations (207-08). The resulting chaos leaves Christendom vulnerable to incursion by non-Christians (209). Remarkably similar themes are expressed in de Mézières' *Epistre*: Christendom is diseased at the top, so Richard II and Charles VI must intervene to heal the schism by arranging a truce between England and France and proceeding to "rescue" the Holy Land (212-14). The poet Oton de Grandson, a courtier to John of Gaunt, may well have been a conduit for peace-promoting ideology between de Mézières and Gower (214-15). Another commonality with Chaucer and Gower is de Mézières' treatise defending marriage and married women (215). Both Gower and de Mézières share in the vilification of Alexander as the prototype of tyrants (218-22). A notable difference between the two authors is their opinion of crusading: de Mézières promoted it by founding a new chivalric order meant to recapture Jerusalem, while Gower was much more reserved, preferring to convert the misbelievers through preaching rather than warfare (216-17, 220-21).



“The six essays in Part III, **“Social Ethics, Ethical Poetics,”** trace the trajectory of two of Gower’s greatest concerns: honest government and honest craft,” bringing together “the very public and the very private (“Others and the Self”) in the fabric of life and thought” (Introduction 2).

Giancarlo, Matthew. “Gower’s Governmentality: Revisiting John Gower as a Constitutional Thinker and Regiminal Writer.” 225-59.

Giancarlo’s argument begins by examining Gower’s admonitory “regimen” for kings in general, including the mirror for princes in Book VII of the *Confessio Amantis*, and how the poet creatively reworked his sources, especially the *Secretum Secretorum* and the regiminal material in Brunetto Latini’s *Livres dou Tresor*. In so doing, the poet addressed “the pragmatics of governmentality,” a term derived from the political theory of Foucault (228). The regiminal tradition was “constitutional” in that it theorized the king’s power not as absolute, but always predicated on justice and the just rule of law (230-45). Following the English tradition enshrined by Bracton, Gower “made the relation of the king and the law one of mutual conditioning” (234). In an exemplum from the *Confessio*’s mirror for princes, the wise sovereign Lycurgus gave his people a just law, then disappeared, never to return; the moral is that good law is necessary for good government, while the person of a king is not (242, citing CA VII.3002-07). Next, Giancarlo discusses Gower’s regiminal theory as he expressed it in his writings addressed to the new king Henry IV, both the Latin encomia and the English *In Praise of Peace*. All are “constitutional” (250) in specifying limits on the king’s power, not through institutional checks and balances as in a modern democracy (246), but grounded in the voice of the people, justice, and law; if Henry violates the principle of “ius,” he will incur both evil fame and the destruction of his rule (245-54). In *In Praise of Peace*, Gower praised Henry, advised him, and expressed hope for his reign, while (constitutionally) affirming his loyalty to Henry’s regal estate, not to his person (258, citing IPP 372-78).

Meindl, Robert J. “Gower’s *Speculum Iudicis*: Judicial Corruption in Book VI of the *Vox Clamantis*.” 260-82.

The title phrase “*Speculum Iudicis*” or “Mirror/Guidebook for Judges” is a take-off on the well-known genre “*speculum principis/regis*,” the “mirror/guidebook for kings” (261 n.4), especially fitting as the judge is a stand-in for the king, who represents God (262). Meindl focuses his analysis on *Vox Clamantis* VI. Chapters 4 and 5 (VI.249-418), both concerned with the moral failings of English judges. Throughout these



chapters, Gower condemns the entire judiciary for allowing “lex” (mere human law) to subvert “ius,” the true justice that “lex” is meant to serve (262). Chapter 4 excoriates the judges from their earliest training as eager for bribes, thus making it impossible for the poor to receive justice; instead, justice must be unlocked with a golden key. These judges are willing prey to indirect forms of influence available only to the rich, known as “laboring” and “maintenance”; the royal treasury suffers thereby, while corrupt judges prosper (265-74). Chapter 5 addresses the judges directly, in a series of “commonplaces” borrowed from *De Vita Monachorum* (276): you scheme to steal your neighbors’ land; rapacious on earth, you are losing treasure in heaven; you will find yourselves harshly judged and eternally suffering in hell—this last has an interesting parallel passage in the thirteenth century English law book cited by Meindl as *Bracton* (279). As explained by Gower (VC VI.179-80), the only hope for reform of a corrupt judge is the personal forum of his conscience: “Given his [Gower’s] insistence everywhere on individual responsibility, we could hardly expect anything else” (280, 281).

Gastle, Brian L. “‘The Lucre of Marchandie’: Poet, Patron, and Payment in Gower’s *Confessio Amantis*. 283-94.

This essay focuses on the specifically “Ricardian” dedicatory passages at the beginning and end of the *Confessio* as compared with the passages that replaced them in “recensions” of the *Confessio* addressed to Henry IV. As Gower describes his chance encounter with Richard II on the royal barge in Ricardian version of the poem, he received a “charge” from his king to perform the “busynesse” of manufacturing a product, a poem (285, citing CA Prol.47-56*). The poet’s humble service and the commercial quality of the transaction are reinforced in the closing dedicatory passage of the Ricardian version (CA VIII.3050-52*, discussed at 289). In the replacement passage found in the Henrician Prologue, Gower abandons the persona of the dependent/supplicant to state his authorial intention with a bold first person indicative verb (CA Prol.52-52, 62-63, discussed at 289). In the final dedicatory passage as found in the Henrician version, Gower deleted the suggestion of patronage by expressing his moral agenda—to advise on the common good—in first person indicative constructions, with himself as subject, and with no suggestion of subservience or hope of royal favor (291). In the same passage, he indicates his discomfort with the “business” of exchanging payment for product—“the lucre of marchandie” (CA VIII.3037, discussed at 292)—as tending to corruption. It seems his intent was to establish a moral voice independent of patronage: “In the end, his



most significant allegiance is neither to Richard nor to Henry, but to his craft" (294).

Parkin, Gabrielle. "Hidden Matter in John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*." 295-305.

This essay considers the material world in Gower's *Confessio*, with particular focus on "crafted things," a cause of particular "anxiety about the ways in which such goods are produced and used" (295) in a corrupt and declining world. Both Aristotle and Thomas taught that all things are "hylomorphic," inseparable in form and matter, while medieval poets believed the same of their craft. As her chief example, Parkin discusses the jewel-encrusted goblet in the "Tale of Albinus and Rosemund," which despite its polished surface and innocent appearance is really constructed around the skull of Rosemund's father, who was killed in battle by her husband Albinus. The ambiguous status of the cup can best be understood in the context of Aquinas and Ockham on form and matter. Following Aristotle, Aquinas taught that "the body of any animal is a substance, while manufactured things . . . are artifacts" (300). For Aquinas, the skull cup is now an artifact, as the body ceases to be a substance when it is no longer alive, but for Ockham, even a dead body retains some properties of a substance—else why do we venerate the bodies of the saints (302)? For Gower, along the lines of Ockham, the skull retains "a kind of vitality" (302), but it is the craftsman who transforms it into a deceptive artifact with the power to do harm. Despite his anxiety over crafted objects, Gower believed in the possibility of honest craft; his own poetry, including the plain morality of "Albinus and Rosemund," is evidence of that (304-05).

Nicholson, Peter. "Writing the *Cinkante Balades*." 306-28.

This essay discusses the *Balades* within the rich tradition of late medieval French ballades (especially the collections and numbered sequences) of Machaut, de Granson, the anonymous Pennsylvania *chansonniere*, and more. "Gower's relation to the tradition is complex. While he clearly adopted many of the most recognizable conventions of form, diction, and theme . . . the work also has some distinctive qualities that set it apart from every earlier collection of *balades*" (307). The most original feature of the *Cinkante Balades* may be its near-ubiquitous use of the envoy, a short stanza concluding the ballade which addresses the poem "from one person to another . . . What is perhaps most unique about that communication is that in 35 of these 48 poems, it takes place explicitly in writing" (314-15)—hence, the title of the essay. This use of direct address



has an intriguing variety of effects, for example: the lover may write what he doesn't dare to say in person (318), and/or "re-enact" as well as describe the futility of his verbal appeal (321). As a dramatic device, the envoy promotes "our awareness of the addressee" (321), thus recording a relationship (happy or otherwise), rather than the usual complaint of a lover in isolation (321-24). An exception to the pattern is the highly original *Balade* 46, where the woman persona muses on her silent pleasure at hearing her beloved praised by others, with no suggestion that her intimate thoughts were meant to be shared (319). The final ballade, addressed to the Virgin Mary, resembles the ending of the *Confessio Amantis* in moving the sequence beyond earthly love, while not rejecting it (325).

Sáez-Hidalgo, Ana. "Gower in Early Modern Spanish Libraries: The Missing Link." 329-44.

It has long been accepted that the two fifteenth-century Iberian manuscripts of the *Confessio Amantis*—one in Portuguese and one a Castilian translation based on the Portuguese—were associated with John of Gaunt's daughters Philippa and Catherine, who were married to the kings of Portugal and Castile. This essay explores what we know and what we can reasonably conjecture about the path these manuscripts followed from their creation in some kind of courtly context, to intermediate owners of humanistic leaning, to the safe haven of royal libraries. The presence of the Castilian MS in the Library of El Escorial is first attested in 1576 in a catalog listing it among the donations by Philip II, whose goal was to create a world-class national library and center of learning. The king very likely received the book from the scholarly Hieronymite friar Juan de Huete, whom he had appointed as the first prior of the Escorial (331-37). In Philip's royal library, the Spanish *Confessio* was classified not as fiction or *fabula*, but as a work of *filosofía* along with other mirrors for princes and didactic works (338-39). The Portuguese manuscript, owned since the early nineteenth century by the Royal Library in Madrid, can be traced along a circuitous path to the library of Luis de Castilla (d. 1618), a book collector whose library included works of "law, classics, history, and regiments of princes, all of them typically humanistic readings" (342). On the death of Castilla, it was acquired by the polymath Count of Gondomar, long-serving ambassador to the court of James II. Left to his descendants, the volume went next to the Royal Library. Throughout its travels, the Iberian *Confessio* "seems to have been continually valued for its moral advice" and especially its regimen for princes (344).] [LBB]



5. Van Dijk, Conrad. *John Gower and the Limits of the Law*. Publications of the John Gower Society VIII. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2013.

[This monograph, revised from the author's 2007 University of Western Ontario dissertation, establishes a solid grounding for the law as an important component of Gower's thinking, through close readings of moments in the *Confessio Amantis* (primarily) his other major works, and some of the less-read ones, as well. Van Dijk resists the argument that we can settle the question of Gower's pre-retirement career on the basis of his poetic content and style, but along the way he does provide as deft a discussion of the Gower-as-lawyer question as one can reasonably expect, barring additional evidence on the subject. Van Dijk neither rules out nor insists upon identifying Gower as a lawyer, but along the way he makes it very clear that Gower was intimately familiar with the workings and discourse of the legal profession. Using that familiarity as a guide, van Dijk analyzes the genres of the *exemplum* and the legal case, which he sees as similar in key ways. Though many readings of the *Confessio* have focused on its construction of *exempla*, van Dijk argues effectively (without investing too much in the notion of stable literary forms) that the case as a form is sometimes a best match for Gower's didactic stories. In the following chapter, on "legal questions" in the *Confessio*, Van Dijk interrogates what sorts of legal issues Gower may have been exploring.

The later chapters explore in depth notions of kingship and justice. This allows van Dijk to engage with a variety of central issues in Gower scholarship (such as Gower's sense of balance between royal authority and the rule of law). Each chapter focuses around an important concept, *regalie*, *equite*, and *retributive justice*, respectively, and each covers solid ground, including in-depth examinations of Books II and VII, as well as the *Cronica Tripertita*. Though van Dijk carefully avoids totalizing readings that would overstate the connection between the ideas raised in these chapters, he does effectively argue for how past readings of legal and political issues in Gower's work have been able to base such different conclusions on the same literary work.] [RAL]

6. Yeager, R.F. "John Gower" in *Écrivains juristes et juristes écrivains du Moyen Âge au siècle des Lumières*, ed. Bruno Méniel (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2015), 648-652.

[Yeager provides an overview of John Gower's engagement, in life and works, with the procedures, lexis and literary-creative influence of common (or civil) law. Biographical facts and conjectures are rehearsed (period of birth; county of origin; possible social, armigerous extraction and filiation; vexed 'striped-sleeves motif' at *Mirour de l'Omme* 21772-74; landed estate ownership and acquisition, including the 'Septvauns Case'; elaborate testament concerning



real estate and chattels), all shown to evince vigorous, if involved, response to law and its proceedings. Moving on to the textual/literary level, RFY reviews a number of passages (in *Mirour*, *Vox*, *Cronica*, *Confessio*) clearly indicative of the poet's writing under multi-sided, common-legal influence across his exceptionally trilingual corpus, critically addressing socio-literary topics from estates to justice and kingship to procedures of love as trial and verdict: "[Gower's] scathing critique of aspects of the judicial system and profession in general; the overt presence of legal terms in his trilingual writings; and often enough the almost judicial presentation of narrative matter have seemed to many largely to prove exact legal knowledge, if not first-hand practice" (650). Yeager thus contributes to a current revival of looking into the case for a "legal Gower." Yet missing from his account is how Gower's *œuvre* also reflects forms of possibly rudimentary, yet significant absorption of canon law. Still unstudied is how Gower would have known about it, most conceivably (if not any earlier) through his exceptionally long residence at the Augustinian priory at Southwark facilitating familiarisation with canon law and ensuing synodal legislation (distinctive components of regular canons' *habitus*). The poems nevertheless reflect a sizeable awareness of that domain, especially in discussions of matrimony or socio-religious estates, not least *Mirour* (notably at 16081-92 ff., and 17137-748; both laws are in syntactic and prosodic equipoise at 16092 and 17140) and *Traitié pour Essembler les Amantz Marietz.*"] [J-PP]



Conference Papers Presented

eJGN will attempt to provide abstracts of lectures, and of papers presented at scholarly conferences, of probable interest to Gowerians. As it is impossible for the editors of *eJGN* to attend all of these (ideal as that would be), Society members either hearing or delivering lectures and/or papers are urged to send brief summaries (@150-200 words) to R.F. Yeager at rfeager@hotmail.com. Members should bear in mind the occasional necessity of editorial emendation of what is sent.

52nd International Congress on Medieval Studies

The John Gower Society sponsored two sessions of papers at the 52nd International Congress on Medieval Studies May 11-14, 2017, on the campus of Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo. These were:

I. "Gower's Afterlives"

Andrea Schutz, St. Thomas University. "Chitre, Jargoune or Seie? Gower's Birds and Twenty-First Century Biotranslation Theory"

[“Kalevi Kull and Peeter Torop have argued that, in a limited way, humans and animals can communicate without using words, and so ask “whether an animal message can be translated into a human one? Can a human message be translated into an animal one? And can animals themselves do any translation?” Gower’s use of animals complicates the issues of biotranslation. Most of his animals do not talk, though some have speech reported for them. Three birds in the *Confessio*, however, *do* talk as/ to humans: Corvus, Philomena and Progne. Corvus’ most important speech is merely reported by Genius – we don’t ‘see’ (or hear) him speaking – but Philomena and Progne have much to say and are allowed to say it. Significantly, their avian voices are not recorded, only human translation of their sound is. Other distinctions are also vital: Corvus is an actual bird, whereas Philomena and Progne are humans turned into birds. All three, however, are unlike Chaucer’s birds because they initiate conversations across *Umwelten*: all three address non-birds (or, at different stages, non-humans) in a desire to communicate. But are they understood? Corvus’ inarticulate ‘caw’ is understood to herald impending disaster, but achieves no more nuance, and Progne’s warning to wives is ignored, if it is heard at all; Philomena’s nightingale song may be received by lovers and poets; but we can’t help but wonder if Genius’ report makes him translator or *interpretes*. The translation of bird language in the *Confessio* thus remains compromised, These examples of biotranslation expose the limits of any translation and intersect with the translation politics



Gower practices as a tri-lingual poet writing a major poem in a hybrid language like English.”]

Kara McShane, Ursinus College. “Textual Revenants: The Emperor, the Masons, and Gower’s Tomb.”

[“In Book Seven of the *Confessio Amantis*, Genius tells a brief anecdote about an emperor and his masons. On the day of his coronation, and every day after, the masons approach the emperor and ask him about his sepulcher: what stone it should be made of, what the sculpture should look like, and what the inscription should say (CA VII.2412-2445). The moment is, of course, a *memento mori*, a reminder of death meant to counteract the effects of flattery. Yet it is also a question of legacy – the tomb will memorialize the emperor after his death. Thus, the masons’ question keeps not only the emperor’s death but also his afterlife on his mind. This short anecdote has implications for Gower’s own monumental afterlife – in particular, his tomb, located in what is now Southwark Cathedral. The tomb is concerned with the poet’s literary afterlife, with his corpus as pillow, as well as his spiritual afterlife with its request for prayers for the deceased. In reading this tale alongside the physical structure, I argue that both bespeaks the preoccupation with legacy that so strongly informed the poet’s literary work, particularly the *Confessio*, and reflects a concern with literary afterlives present in Middle English literature more broadly.”]

R.F. Yeager, University of West Florida. “Gower and Eighteenth-century Literary Culture.”

[“Between 1554, when Thomas Berthelette printed his second edition of the *Confessio Amantis*, and 1810, when Alexander Chalmers essentially reprinted it, no part of Gower’s work appeared in print, save the odd excerpt here and there. Using the “Schools of Medieval English Writers,” a catalogue of brief biographies and literary assessments left unfinished at his death in 1769 by Philip M. Perry, the first secular rector of the English College of St. Alban in Valladolid, Spain, as a focal center-point, the paper takes up the question, ‘Why?’”]



II. “Gower’s Animals”

Jeffery G. Stoyanoff, Spring Hill College. “Fowl Play: Birds and Social Bonds in *Tereus*, *Procne*, and *Philomela*.”

[“The metamorphosis of characters into birds in John Gower’s *Tale of Tereus*, *Procne*, and *Philomela* symbolizes the dissolution of social bonds as a result of the sin of Ravine - rape - one of Avarice’s ministers. Gower emphasizes this dissolution in his description of the birds, writing about their different languages and their different habitats. As humans, Tereus, Procne, and Philomela could communicate, but after they become a nightingale, a swallow, and a lapwing, they no longer share the same language or the same community. They are isolated from one another and excluded from the society they had known, yet each now belongs to a new network that echoes her/his loss. The changing into birds, especially birds of different species, suggests that Ravine and the cannibalism it produces are sins against nature. Ravine fundamentally alters bodies and irrevocably breaks the bonds between members of a society. These birds, then, occupy the fragments of a society broken by Ravine. Gower describes the only bond remaining for the nightingale and swallow: “That thei ne wole of pure schame / Unto no mannes hand be tame” (5.6025-26). That is, the only lasting bond is that neither bird trusts humans enough to be tamed. Clearly the specific human that has caused this is Tereus, but Gower also uses this moment to speak to the sin of Ravine and the distrust that it breeds between creatures.”]

Francine McGregor, Arizona State University. “Animal Bodies, Social Critique, and Equine Medicine in John Gower’s ‘Tale of Rosiphee’.”

[“One medieval cultural orientation toward horses perceived the animal as primarily utilitarian—a beast of physical and figurative work, laboring with its body and also lending its form to mark the status or emotional condition of its master—and thus built a continuity between humans and their equines. And certainly Gower sometimes deploys the horse in this way. But a second orientation, evinced most powerfully in the more literal-minded world of veterinary manuals, perceived the horse as undeniably Other, as behaving according to its own species-specific rules that had little to do with human concerns or morés. Such a representation is at work in Gower’s ‘Tale of Rosiphelee’ in Book 4 of *Confessio Amantis* where in its condition as alterior the horse becomes a unique locus of identification for the unhappy lady rider that Rosiphelee observes. Rather than a figurative reflection of the lady’s social status and failure, the horse enables the lady to describe the ways in which culture has failed *her* just as she, though now a “horse knave,” has failed



her horse. The decrepit animal in ‘Rosiphelee,’ object of empathy as an abused physical being, becomes an apt appraiser of social disfunction.”]

Natalie Grinnell, Wofford College. “Animal Life and Men of Law in John Gower’s *Mirour de l’Omme* and *Vox Clamantis*.”

["Grinnell shows that John Gower subtly challenges the border between the human and the non-human in his condemnation of corrupt lawyers in Book VI of the *Vox Clamantis* wherein he uses images of animal violence to characterize human behavior in a fallen world. The direct contrast between similar content in lines 24181-24624 of the *Mirour de l’omme*, where the animal imagery is completely absent, shows how the *Vox* reintegrates humanity into the natural world, disrupting an ordered cosmology as a way of evoking moral crisis.”]

Gower Project Sessions

I. “International Gower”

Ricardo Matthews, University of California, Irvine. “Lyrical Gower: The *Confessio Amantis* and the *Dits Amoureux*.”

[While much has been written on Gower as the moral, ethical, and political author of a variety of didactic books written in the three languages of England, very little has been written on Gower as a writer invested in the lyric tradition, even though his *Confessio Amantis* shows clear signs of the influence of Machaut and the *dits amoureux*. When we jettison “moral Gower” for a “lyric Gower” our orientation changes. The English book reveals much when read not only within the context of the mixed genre, narratives with inserted lyrics, but more specifically as a sophisticated meditation on the language of love poetry *within* that tradition, not from without. Through this optic, the *Confessio* becomes less a didactic work than a sophisticated critique of love language *within* that tradition. The *speculum principum* in Book VII with Guillaume de Machaut’s *Voir Dit*, a prosimetrum that also includes an *amant senex*. In the *Voir Dit*, political questions—*demandes d’amours*—become the amorous content of love games. The comparison opens avenues through which to think globally about the play involved in Gower’s own book and to recognize the ways Gower positions his book “between earnest and game.”]

Shyama Rajendran, The George Washington University. “From Constance to M. I. A.: Linguistic Subjectivity and Cultural Identity.”

[In an age of rising far-right nationalistic movements, from Brexit to the popularity of Donald Trump and the general prominence of white supremacy



in the current cultural moment, the issue of English as a global language seems more urgent than ever. This paper compares two international subjects--the medieval Constance, featured in John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, and the contemporary global bass artist M. I. A., born Mathangi "Maya" Arulpragasam---in order to re-theorize the relationship between linguistic subjectivity and cultural identity. While both Geoffrey Chaucer and Nicholas Trevet have written versions of the Constance narrative, one key divergence in Gower's retelling of this story is that Gower's Constance is universally understood no matter where she travels. Constance's relationship to language is only ever mentioned once----when the king sees his and Constance's son, and finds out the mother's name is "couste," he immediately recognizes the 'Saxoun' name which is Constance in "'Romein' (CA, II, 1405-6). Gower's version of the tale explicitly makes this climactic point of the narrative a linguistic one. Unlike Chaucer's Constance who, in landing at Northumberland, can communicate because the people speak a corrupt form of Latin, or Trevet's Constance who speaks many languages, Gower's Constance is somehow intelligible no matter where she goes. Arulpragasam's linguistic subjectivity, by comparison, shows us how English itself is still tied to whiteness and conceptions of Anglophone belonging, even as English has become widely spoken across the globe, creating multiple Englishes beyond supposed 'Standard' English. Though Arulpragasam is a citizen of the United Kingdom, rapping in English, her example demonstrates speaking the same language does not guarantee 'equal,' or legitimate, status for an ethnically South Asian woman, when her experience is compared to white Anglophone artists who hail from the 'inner circle' of the English-speaking West."]

Craig E. Bertolet, Auburn University. "Avoiding the False Profit: Gower and the International Business of Salvation."

[“Gower complains in his *Mirour de l’Omme* that a number of individuals derive money from his confessions: ‘no matter how quietly and secretly I have confessed to a priest and duly performed my penance, still the dean wants, yet again, double additional money from me as his part---I do not know why.’ In his later poem, the *Vox Clamantis*, Gower complains that prelates and priests are motivated by the money-box. Scholars have read these passages as comments regarding simony. However, Gower's comments in the *Vox* are specifically a reaction to the monetary demands that the popes increased in England as a result of the Great Western Schism (1378--1417). In the Good Parliament of 1376, the Commons resisted Pope Gregory XI's demands for money to finance his wars in Italy against Milan. When the Schism began two years later, the demands of the pope in Rome increased because he needed to retain the same level of financing despite losing funding sources from half of Europe once France and her allies decided to support the pope in Avignon.



Thomas Walsingham, for instance, complains that Urban VI's emissary, ostensibly in England in 1381 to negotiate the marriage between Richard II and Anne of Bohemia, used his visit to empty England of vast sums of money for the pope. Urban and his successors instituted many other schemes to maintain or improve his cash flow in order to defeat his rival in Avignon. Gower begins his criticisms of the sins of the Church in the *Vox* by mentioning the Schism thereby giving a context for his comments on the rapacity among all levels of the Church hierarchy. As such, he becomes one of the few commentators of the period responding to this international crisis as not just one of faith, but also on of finance.”]

Roundtable: “Gower and Games:

Will Rogers, University of Louisiana at Monroe. “Gower’s Games: Making Play Serious Since 1381.”

[“Gower is often considered a serious poet, uninterested in game or play but, like Chaucer, Gower uses play throughout his works, including the *Confessio Amantis*, where he uses the continuum between earnest and game to work out the nature of choice and the desire for an end or completion. What does it mean to end a life’s work, to leave the court of love, and to make a ‘softe pas’ home? How does one make choices, especially in a closed game in which Gower is both creator and player? Building upon Freud’s notion of game as trauma in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and the *Choose Your Own Adventure* book series, this paper seeks to trace how game and earnest work in the *Confessio* and ultimately collapse into each other, as the choice to play becomes serious. Like the child in Freud’s *Pleasure Principle* who plays a game both to signify and hide traumatic events, Amans and Gower hide the connection between persona and the in-text poet through narratives and their framing, unveiling the truth in the last level (Book VIII). Like a reader for a *Choose Your Own Adventure* book, Amans and the reader are given a number of choices and narratives, and a choice at the end: leave the court of love or leave the court of love.”]

Jeffery Stoyanoff, Spring Hill College. “Love Games: Somnolence and Sex”

[“In Book IV of the *Confessio Amantis*, Genius provides examples of how sex and the games that lead up to sex keep away somnolence. In the *Confessio*, Genius and Amans both depict love games as necessary components of sexual relationships. These games are the crucial actions that both bring the lover and his lady together and then lead to sex as worship in the court of love. Game,



then, becomes productive, speaking not only to sexual reproduction but to Gower's tale-telling game, as well.”]

Kara McShane, Ursinus College. “Playing with the Text: Gower’s Games through Computer-Assisted Analysis.”

[“The *Confessio Amantis* uses the term ‘Game’ thirty-five times, five of which pair it in a construction of ‘erdest and game.’ But what of the other thirty? Many of Gower’s usages, in fact, exist in constructions that suggest things are “but a game,” rather than referring to games in and of themselves. This talk begins to examine Gower’s games through web-based textual analysis tools, particularly *Voyant*. Patterns in Gower’s usage allow exploration of Gower’s perception of games: what is a game for Gower, and what is not? Is there a position between these two possibilities? Also considered is Gower’s usages, for what they suggest about the seriousness of game. Particular emphasis is placed on their social elements.”]

Stephanie Batkie, The University of the South. “Grammar, Game, and How to Read Gower’s Latin: A Modest Proposal.”

[“Gower’s Latin is exciting. This is my starting point for this roundtable presentation, and I use this assumption to take a closer look at a passage in Book III of the *Vox Clamantis* to demonstrate how Gower’s language in the poem can be read as game. In the passage in question, we see a description of abuses of clerical power through a critique of Clement VII, but Gower casts his argument in language that depends on a textuality that is fluid and playful. His language resonates and echoes with earlier moments in the text, looping back and forth through the passage and the poem. The effect is a de-centered text that is less tightly bound and more open, porous, and slippery. This in turn suggests that we develop a new ear for how to approach questions of the word/play Gower threads throughout his Latin works, in order to read in these texts a powerful argument for play as a guiding principle behind the form of his complaint.”]

Kim Zarins did not submit an abstract for this roundtable, but she is in the process of producing one. The title of her piece is “Morality Games in John Gower’s *Confessio Amantis*.”



In the session “Conversions: Transformations in the Vices and Virtues in Late Medieval England”:

Jessica D. Ward, University of North Carolina-Greensboro. “The Multidialogic Grammar of Avarice in John Gower’s *Confessio Amantis*.”

[“Focused on John Gower’s unique and expanded definition of avarice to include rape and idolatry in the *Confessio Amantis*, this talk compared Gower’s use of the exempla technique and distinctions among different aspects of avarice in penitential manuals like Robert Mannyng of Brunne’s *Handlyng Synne*. By expanding avarice’s scope and explicitly calling attention to the lexical ambiguity of rapacity, Gower articulates the conceptual link between the issue of avarice and that of sexual violence already recognized in the medieval legal term, *raptus*. Through its expanded scope and politicized scheme, Gower’s analysis of avarice in Book V of the *Confessio Amantis* reveals the manifold ways in which avarice may corrupt positive and natural law, and the severe consequences that corruption may have on every level of society.”]

In the session “Chaucer’s Voices II: Truth vs. Trumpery”:

Frederick M. Biggs, University of Connecticut. “The Chaucer-Gower Quarrel.”

[“This paper supports the claim of Chaucer’s eighteenth-century editor, Thomas Tyrwhitt, that there was indeed a falling out between Chaucer and Gower by identifying the cause of the argument, Gower’s rewriting of the ‘Wife of Bath’s Tale’ in his ‘Tale of Florent,’ and one of its direct results, Chaucer’s mocking of Gower’s views on alchemy in the ‘Canon’s Yeoman’s Prologue and Tale’. Developing arguments presented in *Chaucer’s Decameron and the Origin of the Canterbury Tales* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2017), I use the quarrel to establish a new chronology for these works. The ‘Wife of Bath’s Tale’ must have been written in the late 1380s in order for Gower to adapt the narrative in the first version of the *Confessio Amantis* (1390), and Chaucer’s work on the Canon’s Yeoman most likely followed shortly thereafter. This context also allows us to reexamine Tyrwhitt’s evidence: Gower’s decision to remove the greeting to Chaucer in later versions of the *Confessio Amantis* and Chaucer’s pointed references to two of Gower’s tales, ‘Canacee’ and ‘Apollonius of Tyre,’ in the ‘Introduction to the Man of Law’s Tale.’ Indeed, Gower’s rewriting of the passage that leads into the *Tale of Florent*, in which he changed his description of his source from ‘tale’ to ‘cronique,’ provides further evidence of the quarrel and offers a new starting point for untangling the chronology of Gower’s revisions of his collection.”]



In the session “When Medievalists Fictionalize the Middle Ages”:

Debra E. Best, California State University-Dominguez Hills. “The Fantasy Space of Medieval History: The Case of Chaucer, Gower, and Bruce Holsinger’s *A Burnable Book*.” [No abstract provided.]

Gower, His Contemporaries, and Their Legacy in MSS and Early Printed Books, 1350-1550.”

The IV International Congress of the John Gower Society in conjunction with the fifteenth biennial meeting of the Early Book Society took place July 9-14, 2017, on the campus of Durham University, UK. The following list contains, in alphabetical order, the names, contact information, affiliation, and paper titles for all presenters:

- Jennifer Alberghini, jalberghini@gradcenter.cuny.edu, CUNY Graduate Center, ““And down thei seten bothe same”: Good Fathers in the ‘Tale of Jason and Medea’ and the ‘Tale of Apollonius of Tyre’”
- Lucy Allen, University of Cambridge, “Queer Constraints, Queer Critiques: Gower’s ‘Tale of Tereus’ in Cambridge, University Library MS Ff. 1. 6”
- Sarah Baechle, sbaeche@nd.edu, University of Notre Dame, “Constructing an Anglo-French Hermeneutic: The Case of John Gower”
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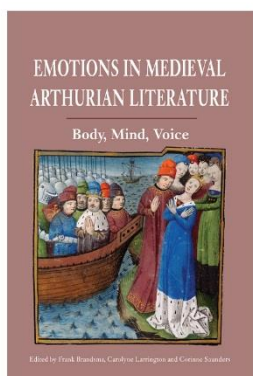
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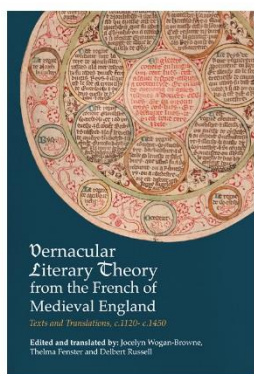
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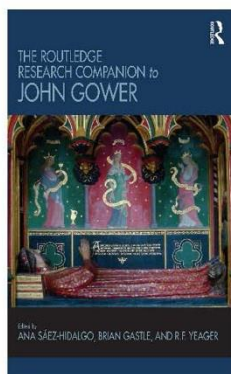
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